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GERMAN IDEALISM AND PRUSSIAN MILITARISM

CHARLES WILLIAM SUPER



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GERMAN IDEALISM AND
PRUSSIAN MILITARISM



German Idealism and Prussian Militarism

By

CHARLES WILLIAM SUPER, Ph.D., LL.D.

Ex-president of the Ohio University; some time professor of Greek and Dean of the College of Liberal Arts ibidem; Translator of "Weil's Order of Words"; Author of a "History of the German Language"; "Between Heathenism and Christianity"; "Wisdom and Will in Education"; "A Liberal Education, with a list of five hundred best Books"; "Plutarch on Education"; "A Revaluation of Some Historical Values"; and numerous monographs on Educational, Historical, Ethical and Philosophical topics in German, American and British periodicals.

"We kind o' thought Christ was agin war and
pillage."—LOWELL.

"He was a man
Who stole the livery of the court of heaven
To serve the Devil in."

—POLLOCK.

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PREFATORY NOTE

"Uncle Theodore was the exact type of one of those Germans of the old style whose affectation it is scoffingly to repudiate the old idealism of the race, and, intoxicated by conquest, to maintain a cult of strength and success which shows that they are not accustomed to seeing them on their side. But as it is difficult at once to change the age-old nature of a people, the despised idealism sprang up again in him at every turn in language, manners, and moral habits and quotations from Goethe to fit the smallest incidents of domestic life, for he was a singular compound of conscience and self-interest. There was in him a curious effort to reconcile the honest principles of the German *bourgeoisie* with the cynicism of the new commercial *condottieri*—a compound which forever gave out a flavor of hypocrisy, forever striving to make of German strength, avarice, and self-interest the symbols of right, justice and truth."

The above quotation from Jean Christophe, written more than a decade ago, succinctly sets forth the change that has taken place in the German psyche, mainly during the reign of the present emperor. It is a transformation of which few Germans, even the most intelligent, are aware or conscious; hence many of their spokesmen try to persuade themselves and others that the old point of view has not been abandoned. And it is to be noted that the Germany of romance, of music, of imaginative literature is mainly non-Prussian. There is thus an unconscious antagonism between the spirit of the old South and that of the new North. Modern German literature is hardly a century and a half old, and it has never been really domesticated in Prussian domains proper. It is scarcely probable that Frederic II seriously contemplated making Berlin the intellectual capital of Germany. With his undisguised contempt for the literature of the Fatherland he could not anticipate the epiphany of the great German thinkers and writers, some of whom were born during the later years of his reign. To him the German tongue was in itself a handicap to success in literature. The end he sought was the political predominance which he was successful in achieving. While writing the

following pages I have tried to be impartial, but I have not tried to be neutral. I cherish a strong antipathy to autocratic government and an abiding faith in democracy, although I am fully cognizant of the strength of the former under certain conditions and of the weaknesses of the latter. I regard the doctrine of the divine right of kings as an anachronism, an absurdity, and as interpreted by the present German emperor, a frightful obsession. There will be no abiding peace on earth so long as there remains a monarch who interprets right in terms of might and who is sufficiently powerful to impose his will upon his own subjects and upon other peoples.

CHARLES W. SUPER.

Athens, O., May 31st, 1916.

GERMAN IDEALISM AND PRUSSIAN MILITARISM

I

A story used to be told, about half a century ago, of a German scholar who had elaborated with the utmost care and thoroughness a system of philosophy which he felt sure would supersede all others. One day when he was expounding his system to some interested friends one of them called his attention to certain points that were clearly at variance with well established facts. His answer was: "If your facts will not fit into my system, so much the worse for the facts." It is this peculiar perspicacity that enabled the German war party, when the present conflict broke out, to foretell a rebellion in Ireland* and in

* Since this was written the Sinn Fein uprising occurred in Dublin and in other cities of Ireland. It seems to have been a rebellion in the same sense in which the anti-draft riots in New York and elsewhere in the North during the Civil War were such.

India, the secession of Canada and South Africa—in short, the British possessions all over the world were to obey a centrifugal impulse which would make them fly from the imperial capital like the drops from a revolving grindstone. We may note the same remarkable second sight in the state of mind which qualifies its possessor to discern that Theodore Roosevelt is really pro-German, his violent anti-Teuton utterance notwithstanding. The vaticinations of these prophets were like those of Cassandra except in one particular: hers were true but were fated to be unheeded, theirs were heeded but proved to be false. It is this intellectual acumen which enables those endowed with it to discover that the chauvinism of the Germans was prepared by their philosophers and imaginative writers more than a century ago. He who can discern in the works of Goethe, of Schiller, of Lessing and of others of their countrymen—if such a designation can be fittingly employed when we speak of men whose only bond was that of speech—the spirit that brought about German efficiency by means of a closely correlated system directed from above is endowed with an insight that is too wonderful for all men except the small number of elect. The ordinary reader can find in the writings of

none of the coryphei of Teutonic literature even an adumbration of the sentiment that is expressed in the motto *Deutschland über Alles*.

II

What is the testimony of the three great creators of imaginative German literature on this point? Lessing congratulated himself more than once that he was without a tinge of *Vaterlandsliebe*. A man of his tastes and discernment could see nothing in German literature or in German political conditions calculated to kindle the faintest spark of enthusiasm. So far as his ideals in literature were concerned he sought and found them in foreign lands except those that he had himself created. "Nathan the Sage," his most mature production, was written to prove that a man should not be judged by the land of his birth, nor by the religion he professes, but by his conduct. In the choice of his theme he was no doubt largely influenced by the doctrinal bigotry which he saw among his countrymen, and indeed everywhere. What meaning could a German of the eighteenth century attach to the term *Vaterlandsliebe* when he saw his country divided into a large number of states that were often at war with one

another, or at least allies of hostile belligerents? So late as the Napoleonic wars the South German States were usually arrayed against those of the North, a condition of affairs that we find existing even in 1866. Was Goethe, who was born in the free city of Frankfort, to commend the same brand of patriotism with Schiller, who was a Wurtemberger, or with Lessing and Herder, who were natives of a distant part of the old empire? Patriotism had no influence upon the formation of political alliances. If it was to be founded on kinship of speech, how could we include Austria, and especially Switzerland, notwithstanding Arndt's comprehensive answer to the question, *Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?* It requires extraordinary perspicacity to see what does not exist and what nobody can discern unless he has made up his mind in advance to discover what he is looking for to find in Goethe's writings what is usually called patriotism, or anything approaching it. He was sixty-five years old when the battle of Waterloo was fought, one result of which was a political reaction all over Europe, but particularly in Germany. Yet he could say, according to a reported conversation with Soret: "National hatred is quite a peculiar thing. You will find that it is strongest and fiercest in the lowest culture. But there is also

a stage where it entirely disappears, where one stands to some extent above the nations and sympathizes with the weal or woe of a neighboring people as with that of one's own. The latter stage of culture suited my nature and I had confirmed myself in it long before attaining my sixtieth year." Many years before this date he had reached the pinnacle of his fame and could say what he pleased without running the risk which a man of less note would have incurred. The political condition of Europe had little interest for him. He was willing that the course of events should be directed by such men as Metternich and those who stood with him to carry out his policy of reaction. In Italy the Carbonari were active, devising plans to secure larger political rights for their countrymen. In Germany *das junge Deutschland* was making diligent propaganda, more or less political, although the latter phase of its activities was kept in the background. Goethe had taken part, in a way, in the campaign into France and had an intimate knowledge of the atrocious proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick to the French people. But the thoughts that were uppermost in the minds of most people elicited no comment or opinion from him except in the most cold-hearted way. Like all men of superior minds,

he endeavored envisage the situation from an objective standpoint. He was unceasingly occupied with the study of problems that promoted his self-development. To this end he was willing to sacrifice everything and everybody. While not intentionally cruel or purposely heartless, or callously indifferent to human suffering, his first thought was always of himself. Perhaps his "Egmont" may be considered a protest against religious and political intolerance; but he did not return to the theme again, as did Schiller over and over. He was almost wholly indifferent to religion and saw no cause for martyrdom for the sake of a creed since men would outgrow their intolerance in the natural course of development.

III

In 1896 Herr Siegfried published a Goethe-Brevier, for which he collected 845 apothegms from the works of this Superman. I have not been able to find a single one that has any bearing on the political events or conditions of his time. He has much to say about Life, about Art and Artists, about God and Religion; on the troublous affairs of Europe, and especially of Germany, not a word. In "*Wahrheit und Dichtung*" he avers that a good work of art may have moral results, but to ask the artist to aim at moral ends is to spoil his occupation. To Schiller he wrote that the artist must himself be the best judge whether or not he ought to accept the suggestion of others. He finds nothing more stupid than to say to a poet: You should have done thus and so in this case and in another differently, because you cannot make a poet anything different from what nature intended him to be. If you force a poet to be something else, you destroy him. He holds that all contentment lies in ourselves. We are our own devil; we

expel ourselves from our paradise. Goethe's contemporaries found much fault with him for his languid interest in the affairs of his country, and it was with reference to these criticisms that he uttered the sentiments to Soret quoted above. I have found no evidence that Goethe share his friend Schiller's faith in the efficacy of the drama as a moral agency. He seems to have been of a different opinion. As the chief aim of poetry is artistic, its moral teachings will always be indirect. The Utopia sketched in the "*Wanderjahre*" is to have no theaters and no taverns. There is to be no standing army, but military drill is to be made an important part of education, because the citizens are to be qualified to fight in self-defense. Education is to be moral, industrial, mental and religious; but to Goethe religion is synonymous with reverence, a term that occurs often in his writings. Neither bells nor drums are to be tolerated. Workingmen are to be summoned to their labor by the sound of wind instruments. The dogma taught and put in practice by Frederic the Great that whatever is conducive to the welfare of the state is right would assuredly have not been endorsed by him. It is so glaringly absurd that one must wonder how any man of average common sense can be misled by it. The solution of eco-

omic problems is to be wrought out by the same of his own life, by work. In a slight degree he anticipated the industrial state as organized by the Prussian government in the nineteenth century, although similar ideas are found in Plato and in other writers. The importance of work, either mental or physical, or both combined, is also emphasized in the closing parts of Faust.

IV

To call Goethe the Great Heathen is hardly just, unless we understand by this designation that he was not a positive Christian. Here, too, he was at variance with the Prussian state, or at least with the German emperor, who has frequently declared in his speeches that a man cannot be a good soldier unless he is also a good Christian. To Goethe the cultivation of art and of artistic appreciation was worship. This idea may have come to him independently, but it was strengthened by his visit to Italy, the country in which painting and sculpture and architecture, as in ancient Athens, are the expression of religious emotion. These objects may indeed promote the interests of religion, but they are no support to good morals, except in the case of individuals who are by nature disposed to yield to the restraints imposed upon them by ethical teachings. In later years Goethe's views seem to have undergone considerable change in this respect. He began to discover that what may fan a flame will not kindle a fire. Goethe's faith in

the potency of orderly development was strikingly exhibited in the tenacity with which he held to the Neptunian theory in geology. The doctrine of upheavals was a great annoyance to him. He cursed the "execrable racket and lumber-room of the new order of creation." He permitted his esthetic instincts to mold his scientific opinions to such an extent that he felt the bitterest hostility to views based on carefully conducted observations and researches. Even the great name of von Humboldt was not sufficient to induce him to change his attitude or even to use greater moderation in defending it. His opinion of Luther was of two kinds. He felt a certain gratification at the results of his activities and was proud of what he had accomplished for religious liberty, but he condemned his violent methods. If he had lived in the days of the Great Reformer, he would have been an Erasmian, not a Lutheran. In one of the Xenian we read:

*"Franzium drängt, in diesen verworrenen Tagen
wie ehemals
Luthertum es getan, ruhige Bildung zurück."*

V

He was hostile to the Romanticists, for he regarded their preachments as a return to mediæval obscurantism. He was thoroughly disgusted with Schlegel for his entry into the Roman Catholic church. It was, perhaps, with this act in mind that he expressed himself more vigorously than was his wont or than at any other time of his life, as an adherent of Protestantism (1817). Identifying himself with his co-religionists, he declared that "We cannot accord to our Luther higher honor than by openly, earnestly and vigorously expressing and repeating what he considered right and advantageous to our nation and our age." It is hard to discover in Goethe the model citizen or an exemplar for posterity when we recall what his relations with women usually were, and the fact that his domestic establishment was founded on the mere gratification of sensual desire, in which there was to be found hardly a tinge of the higher sentiments. His household was presided over by a woman who was in almost every respect her hus-

band's inferior and whom he made his wife solely for the purpose of legitimizing children born out of wedlock. Doubtless this, too, was one of the venial peccadilloes of the Superman.

Early in life Schiller expressed himself as follows: "I write now as a citizen of the world; as one who is subject to no prince, to no king. To care for mankind, the people, is my sole study; in the public I recognize my true sovereign, my true bosom friend. To this tribunal, and to no other, I am responsible. There is something magnificent in the thought that I am subject now to no restrictions save those inspired by public opinion. To no Cæsar do I appeal, but to the universal soul of mankind. A citizen of the universe, in every man I see a member of a family—my own. Whatever may be the outward show of rank, office or position, I look through all these articles of dress and decoration and see only my fellow-citizen." It was such utterances that led to the bestowal of the title "*citoyen français*" upon him by the National Convention. Yet so imperfectly was he known in Paris that his name was understood to be Gillès. He had little taste and less natural aptitude for the work of the conscientious historian. He lacked the necessary patience for poring over old books and manuscripts, a defect of which he was fully

conscious. He once wrote to a friend that history was a sort of storehouse for his imagination, the contents of which had to submit to whatever use he wished to make of them, and that he would always be a poor authority for any future writer who should be so unfortunate as to trust his guidance. But he consoled himself with the reflection that he might be able to implant in the minds of his hearers his own passionate love of liberty. "Already I have read with enthusiasm the story of the Revolt of the Netherlands, and I find there represented my own ideas of freedom. It will be my endeavor to spread among my students something like my own enthusiasm. History must serve as the canvas on which my own ideas are depicted." This principle, if followed, would vitiate all historical writing. In the annals of some nations it would be wholly out of place, because it did not enter into the minds of the chief actors. To write a history on such a plan would generally be to lead the reader astray. In the later years of the eighteenth century, Schiller began to look to Berlin as the source whence the light of religious liberty would shine forth, chiefly because it was the most Protestant capital of his country. In 1804 he wrote to Zelter: "In the dark time of superstition, Berlin first kindled the torch of na-

tional political liberty." While this averment was true of some of the earlier periods, and particularly of the era of Frederick the Great, the torch did not at all times burn brightly and with a steady light. Schiller's dictum shows in a striking manner how differently "religious liberty" was interpreted in Germany, in England, and later in the United States and France. It is interesting to compare Schiller's conception of the poet's mission with that of Wordsworth, who also believed that "every great poet is a teacher. I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing." The Briton, however, always looked upon nature in her benevolent aspects. He seems never to have realized that she "is red in tooth and claw." This stern fact Goethe had in mind when he wrote: "Let man be noble, helpful and kind, for that alone distinguishes him from all beings that we know." Nature, as he clearly saw, has no feeling. Human nature is, therefore, something higher and nobler only when humanity makes it so with a conscious purpose. Schiller appears never to have clearly apprehended that nature in its widest aspect is inexorable as death and that it is often impossible to change the order of events.

VI

Because a considerable number of Germans still have faith in the potency of the drama as a moral agency, it may not be amiss to examine briefly the solidity of the foundation upon which this belief rests. It is not held in any other country of the world. In the United States, as in England, Shakespeare is studied private a great deal. But no American or Britisher would advise his friends to attend the theater for the purpose of hearing lessons on ethics. He would be more likely to advise him to remain away for this reason. But so firmly is the belief in the ethical value of the drama intrenched in the German mind that the students at the Universities are permitted to attend public performances for a merely nominal fee. This is rendered possible because all the theaters are subsidized by the government. How much effect this has on the public conscience is demonstrated by the fact that nowhere is the doctrine that might makes right so assiduously and unblushingly preached as by Germans, a doctrine

that is not only a mischievous, but a frightful, fallacy. No dramatic author is so minutely scrutinized in Germany as Shakespeare. Yet few of his plays, if any, were composed with a didactic purpose. Hamlet is perhaps the most popular, and Hamlet is a psychological study, pure and simple. On the other hand, the theater is not popular in England in the sense that it is in Germany. The English novel was written mainly for a didactic purpose, when it first began to appeal to the public. This tendency is plainly evident in Richardson, and even in Defoe. For while "Robinson Crusoe" seems to have been composed for the sake of the story solely, it is permeated from beginning to end with pious reflections and with arguments to prove the superiority of the Christian to all other religions. Both these books had an extraordinary vogue in Germany. The didactic novel received a great impulse through Sir Walter Scott, whose imaginative creations had a strong influence on Goethe as his Götz von Berlichingen testifies. The opposition was represented by Fielding; in poetry by Shelley and Byron. In the writings of neither is there the slightest evidence of a desire to teach, although it is not by their dramas that they are best known, at least as dramas. In this country Poe stood

S. M. 1771
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almost alone for a long time in opposing the doctrine that it is the province of the poet to teach. To this attitude is largely due his popularity in France, given, of course, his extraordinary native merit. His essay on *The Poetic Principle* is a clear and eloquent defense of the right of poetry to exist for itself and on its own merits. He says: "I would define, in brief, the poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of beauty. Its sole arbiter is taste. With the intellect or with the conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless, incidentally, it has no concern either with duty or with truth." Poe explains, however, in exact agreement with Goethe—he seems to have had a very superficial acquaintance with German literature—and with Ruskin, that it by no means follows "that the incitements of passion, or the principles of duty, or even the lessons of truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage." But these things must be incidental to the main purpose of the work.

VII

The doctrine that national unity can be brought about by force alone is based on many historical precedents. Switzerland and the United States are not, strictly speaking, an exception. It was the misfortune of the ancient Greeks that none of their states was strong enough to bring under its sway the numerous petty commonwealths by force, nor sagacious enough to achieve the same end by diplomacy. The Roman empire was the creation of force; but its government was of such beneficent character that many of its citizens whose ancestors had been subjugated by the sword were proud of this appellation. In Spain and France almost simultaneously the obstreperous nobility were constrained to submit to a central authority. A somewhat similar centrifugal agency operated in Great Britain until 1745, when Scotland was finally subdued. In Ireland, on the other hand, a large portion of the people have steadily refused to be reconciled to British rule because her overlords would not make due allowance for the national

spirit. The German historians saw this more clearly than the imaginative writers, and it is they who persistently preached the doctrine that German unity must come under Prussian leadership. As early as 1848 Gustav Freytag expressed this Prussian lust for dominion when he wrote: "If in order to bring about (German) unity we must march against Germans (which God forbid) Prussia will march, and perhaps that is what distinguishes us Prussians from other Germans; for we are ready to shed our last drop of blood to have our way. What should we fear? Are we not a nation of warriors?" After '66 the Prussian students who sojourned at the South German universities began to treat their confreres with a greater degree of condescension, although it had previously been somewhat in evidence. While willing to admit that the Swabians were their superiors in poetry they looked upon them somewhat askance as dreamers and heavy-wits, as afflicted with an ineradicable *gaucherie*. More than once when I used Swabian words and forms of expression I was told that "we do not use that word," or "we do not call it by that name." Platt Deutsch was regarded as a speech that had its merits and had to its credit some notable names in contemporary literature; but what could be

said of the Swabian? Little except that it had a not discreditable past, and an interesting historical development. It was regarded as a most serious mistake of Luther that he did not come into the world farther north. Following a custom of long standing, many Prussian students spent at least one semester, by preference that falling in the summer, at Heidelberg, or Freiburg, or Tübingen, not because they could learn anything better than at home, but because of the agreeable location of these seats of learning. The complaint has recently been made that the Prussian officers are wont to assign the most difficult and dangerous military enterprises to the South German troops in order to spare their own. The credit for victory or for the display of exceptional bravery would none the less accrue to those in command; for is not Prussia conducting this war on behalf of all Germany? What could the smaller states accomplish of themselves? They would simply be crushed by the first onslaught of a foreign foe. Admitting that the South Germans, particularly the Austrians, are more *gemüthlich* than their northern brethren, what is the good of *Gemüthlichkeit* in the strenuous affairs of practical life? In the intense international and domestic struggle

for the primacy it belongs to those who are always keyed up and ready to act.

It was doubtless with a view to conciliating the Wurtembergers that the kaiser called Count Zepelin "the greatest German of the twentieth century" after he had conferred upon him the Order of the Black Eagle. It is characteristic of the German emperor's idea of greatness that its acme was reached by a man whose only title to distinction lies in an invention that can be used solely for purposes of destruction and for spreading devastation, indiscriminate and un pitying. It is significant of the South German state of mind that the Bavarian crown-prince in one of his speeches objected to the assumption that the affiliated sovereigns are vassals of the Emperor. On another occasion the same man declared that he did not wish to be regarded as a minor brother, but as a brother with full rights and powers. The emperor has visited Munich, Stuttgart and Leipzig less often than foreign capitals. It has been suggested that the reigning sovereigns in these two capitals and in Dresden were averse to seeing at their side a greater than themselves. But it may also be due to the conviction on the part of the emperor that in these cities his reception would be less cordial than among his Brandenburgers,

where there was no one to share his royal honors. Aside from his monomania about the Great Ally, about the Divine Right of kings and the eminent services of the Hohenzollerns, he exhibits a great deal of shrewdness.

VIII

For at least a century there has been a fairly uniform development in British and American thought and commerce, in politics and economics. The German empire, on the other hand, is, almost as much as Japan, a new creation. It is no longer the land of Philosophers, of fairy tales, of poets and solitary thinkers. Whether for better or for worse, the transformation has been wonderful. Until recently the Germans were wont to stigmatize the British as traffickers and hucksters. Then they themselves entered the field of practical affairs and are now boasting of their efficiency and superiority. And, in truth, they have outstripped the British, and not the British alone, but all the rest of the world. They have demonstrated their superiority in every domain of commerce and manufactures, and are inordinately proud of their achievements. They have creased to acquiesce in French predominance on land and English predominance on the sea, retaining for themselves only the hegemony of the air. They want to be first in all three. The outside world has no cause for finding

fault with them on this account. But it is diverting to meet Germans who seem honestly to believe that this thoroughly materialized Germany is founded on the German idealism of a century ago and is a natural development therefrom. As Prussia took the lead in arousing the national consciousness at the beginning of the nineteenth century, she is in no mood to surrender the primacy to any other part of the Fatherland. As this preponderance was not brought about by peaceful methods, the Prussians insist that it cannot be maintained by peaceful means, although they have been proclaiming long and loud that preparedness for war is the best guarantee of peace. It has proved just as true as was the dictum of Napoleon III, *l'empire, c'est la paix*. This position is falsified by the whole course of human affairs. It is hardly probable that Bismarck shared the fallacy when he forced upon Prussia budget after budget early in the sixties, in spite of the adverse votes of the Reichstag. Amid the avalanche of official correspondence that has almost overwhelmed the world since the outbreak of the present war it is impossible to decide to what extent Russia shares the responsibility. But one fact is fairly well established: it does not rest mainly on either the Muscovite or the British empire.

IX

Schiller was as ardent a champion of personal liberty as Goethe and a much more enthusiastic devotee of political liberty. Perhaps if the latter had been obliged to pass his most impressible years under military constraint, as was the case with Schiller, he would have expressed his dissatisfaction with equal vigor if not with equal violence. As we have only the testimony of Schiller himself, it may be doubted that the strict military discipline by which the Carlsschule was governed was harsher than that of similar institutions elsewhere. At any rate, the Germans of the twentieth century have introduced quasi-military discipline into every walk of life and defend its ruthless application. The Robbers were, however, a protest against convention of all kinds in the Great Society rather than against the restraints by which the author believed himself handicapped.

Schiller's mind sometimes dwelt with intense longing on ancient Greece, the land in which the highest homage is paid to beauty. To him as to

Goethe, the artist, not the strong man, approaches nearest to the divine. He is the favorite of the gods, partakes of the divine nature and reveals it in visible symbols, either to the eye or to the ear. In this regard both poets were completely at variance with Protestantism. Schiller's faith in the drama as a teacher of morals is not founded on experience; it is contradicted by history. It is going back to the age of Mysteries and Miracle Plays when few persons could read. Besides, this method of instruction is unpractical. Only a small portion of the people in even the most thickly settled parts of the country could be reached in this way. The idea leaves out of account the rural population and the dwellers in the towns and small cities. The ancient Greek tragedy was written for the elect, not for the man whose life was spent in toil. If moral instruction is to come through the reading of the written page, as Plutarch recommends, it can be given in a less diluted form. I have found no evidence that Goethe shared his friend's faith in the moral potency of the drama. He seems at times to have had doubts about the value of any systematic instruction in morals. Nordau, in his "Philosophy of History," quotes him as saying that "men become cleverer and more intelligent, but not better

or happier, or more effective in action." To a man who entertains such views, ideals have little significance. His opinions on the functions of art are concisely expressed in the words of Ruskin, who declares, when writing of the works of Homer: "They were not didactically conceived, but they are didactic in their essence, as all good art is." These are almost the words of Goethe as given on a previous page. Plutarch endeavors to extract ethical lessons from lyric, tragic and epic poetry; but he finds it necessary to select such passages as lend support to his preconceived doctrines and to reject those that are at variance therewith. This method may be effective with the boy or the man who is by nature morally inclined as were Plutarch and the noble Swabian; but in Greek tragedy vice prospers as often as virtue, while the gods are both vindictive and merciless. The ancient Greeks were enthusiastic admirers of their tragic poets. The words of Homer were constantly on their lips. But their statesmen were far readier to quote passages that supported their evil propensities than their better nature. The reputation of the Greeks for veracity, for rational patriotism, for humaneness in dealing with enemies, for integrity was always very bad.

X

Although Schiller was a more pronounced individualist, in some respects, than Goethe, he was less selfish. He knew the lowly better and sympathized with them. Often, however, we find the two men in complete accord. In "Wilhelm Tell" we read such sentiments as: "*Die schnellen Herrscher sind's die kurz regieren* (The impetuous rulers are those whose rule is brief). "*Die einz'ge Tat ist jetzt Geduld und Schweigen*" (The only deed is patience now and silence). Such sentiments are a protest against the activities of those reformers who would make over the world in a day. Again: "*Ein jeder zählt nur sicher auf sich selbst*" (A man counts safely on himself alone). "*Der Starke ist am mächtigsten allein*" (The strong man is most potent when alone). There is here no sympathy with collectivism. "*Das Haus der Freiheit hat uns Gott gegründet*" (The house of freedom God has founded for us). "*Dann erst genieß' ich meines Lebens recht Wann ich's musz jeden Tag auf's neu' erwerben*" (Then

only do I get full enjoyment of my life, when I have to win it each day anew). This sentiment is echoed in the second part of *Faust*: "*Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben, Der täglich sie erwerben muss*" (He alone is worthy of freedom and of life who must earn them every day). The closing scene of *Tell* is somewhat tame, but it is a noble tribute to the spirit of liberty: Bertha, the free Swiss woman, gives her hand and heart to the free Swiss man, and he declares all his bondsmen free. Albeit, the hero positively refuses to co-operate with the conspirators except in his own way and at his own time. Yet he does not court danger. He exhibits no bravado. He attributes his failure to do obeisance to the hat to his innate stupidity and promises that he will never be guilty in the same way. Tell's candor, his guilelessness, his habit of speaking his whole mind, caused him to be regarded as somewhat lacking in common sense, as something of a simpleton and dullard. He intimates that his name is an epithet popularly applied to him individually and not that of his ancestors. Furthermore, it may be stated in this connection that the judgment Tell passes upon himself corresponds pretty closely with the opinion widely held by foreigners regarding the Germans in general.

Although the dying Stauffacher exhorts his friends to be One, to be equal participants in the effort and determination to throw off the yoke of Austria, the work was to be accomplished by mutual co-operation and reciprocal aid. It was in this way that the Swiss confederation was formed; in this way it continued to grow until it attained its present status. There is in the example of the Swiss cantons or states no historical precedent for the formation of the German empire bound together with iron bands and cemented with blood. The Austrians, moreover, find little in Schiller's dramas to gratify their national pride. Both as the head of a household and as an idealist Schiller is far more worthy of admiration than his greater contemporary. Notwithstanding his struggle with poverty almost all his life and with ill health in his later years, no pessimism appears in his writings. It is not an improbable supposition that his optimistic view of the larger world was a good deal influenced by his almost ideal domestic relations.* •

*About twenty years ago one of the leading booksellers of Leipzig told me that the Schiller cult was rapidly waning. The centennial year of his death produced a slight revival, but the effect was not permanent. In truth his works contain very little pabulum for the nourishment of ultra chauvinists. There is nothing in the history of the Thirty Years War to arouse German pride, and still less in the history of the Revolt of the Netherlands to awaken German national sym-

pathy. A German who is persecuted for his religion may emigrate, but he will hardly fight. Schiller found the materials for his tragedies in Italy, in Switzerland and in France, in England for two, in Austria, but none in his own country. Even in his lyrical poems he is rather a citizen of the world than of Germany.

XI

It is instructive to compare, for a moment, the career of Goethe with that of a man who was his contemporary for a third of his life, with Voltaire, the greatest literary character produced by France. The German always thought of himself first; the Frenchman devoted a good deal of thought to others, and, it may be added, very serious thought. Wherever he saw malice, stupidity and bigotry in high places he girded at them with the keen lance of his pen, although he did not always stop with that. Voltaire's "*infame*," a term that he employed so often in the watchword "*écrasez l'infame*," was not Christianity, nor even the Catholic church: it was "persecuting and privileged orthodoxy." Voltaire was no more a leveller than was Goethe. He did not believe that all men are created equal. But he was the bitter and uncompromising foe of institutions and laws that made merit to consist solely in birth, ancestry, and in social position. To him it mattered not so much that the wronged were his

countrymen as that they were men. Voltaire's outlook was far wider than Goethe's. And while the methods he employed in enriching himself were often of questionable morality, they were no worse than those current in his day. Moreover, he dispensed his wealth with a lavish hand. It is believed that his domestic establishment at Ferney consisted of more than half a hundred persons, few of whom had any claim upon his generosity except the claim of sympathy. Goethe moralized a great deal, but he rarely acted; Voltaire always acted when action alone promised to bring the results he sought. These lines are not written to condemn Goethe or to commend Voltaire, but simply to point out a few differences in the mentality of two men who dominated the thought of Europe for more than a century, a mentality that is characteristic of the two nations to which they belonged. Their attitude toward their political environment is equally characteristic.

XII

Both Goethe and Schiller during most of their lives took a languid interest in contemporary politics. Both evidently reached the conviction during their early years that the political, like the economic conditions of a people, improve with their progress in enlightenment; and enlightenment is not the equivalent of education. This belief was also shared with the philosophers, most of whom dwelt in an empyrean of their own construction. Goethe passed the last forty years of his life without any regular employment except such as he found congenial to his tastes. Instead of choosing the Prussian capital, with its turmoil and bustle and political intrigues, as a place of residence, he remained in the little city on the Ilm. He had some illustrious prototypes for his aloofness from politics. Socrates was a witness of the departure of the Sicilian expedition, freighted not only with men, but with high hopes and brilliant expectations. He knew at first hand the frightful calamity that overwhelmed it. When the disaster

at Aegospotamos engulfed their country Socrates was still living and his most illustrious pupil was twenty years of age. Yet no mention is made of either event in the Dialogues of Plato. I have not found in Goethe's writings his opinion of Frederic the Great. In *Wahrheit und Dichtung* he relates that his family was divided between sympathy for Austria and for Prussia, some taking the side of one, some of the other. The merits of the case did not determine the decision; it was self-interest real or imaginary and irrational sympathy. In another place he discusses the superman whom he calls *daimonic*, where he may have the Prussian monarch in mind. Such men, he declares, are not necessarily superior in talents or in spirit, rarely in goodness of heart. They are admired because they are strong and do things. It is their power, not their character, that impresses the multitude. They cannot be checked except by other men equally prepollent. He quotes the proverb: "*Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse.*" It must be said to Goethe's credit that he did not always profess to have been consistent in his opinions. He was well aware that it evinces a little mind if a man at sixty holds the same opinions that he held at thirty. He who would know what Goethe thought on every subject during the

course of his long life will have to devote two or three years almost exclusively to reading his voluminous works and his enormous correspondence. In this laborious task he will come across many platitudes—sayings that are deemed important merely because they were uttered by a wise man. It is hardly possible that he approved Frederic's infamous proposal to Maria Theresa when he was about to undertake the war against Austria. It amounted virtually to this: Your house has been in unquestioned possession of certain territory for more than a century. Now I want part of it. If you will give me the portion to which I lay claim, I will defend, or help to defend, your title to the rest against all future comers. When this outrageous proposal was indignantly rejected Frederic proceeded to take possession by force of arms, the Pragmatic Sanction notwithstanding. His action was even less excusable than the recent invasion of Belgium, by order of the emperor, and he knew it, for he hardly attempted to justify his action. There was no Pragmatic Sanction in the way, and the German emperor of the twentieth century might allege that he was not bound by a treaty made by Prussia alone. I doubt whether modern history contains a more infamous proposal or a more shameful way of enforcing a shadowy

claim or one based on so slender a foundation of equity. In fact, Frederic's entire statesmanship was shaped by the maxim that might makes right and that whatever the supreme authority believes to be conducive to the interest of the state is to be its rule of conduct without regard to what the rest of the world thinks. A people who makes such a man a national hero can maintain their supremacy only by being constantly armed to the teeth. It is almost inevitable that a day will come when a coalition will be formed against a monarchy dominated by such principles, stronger than it, and which will treat it as it treated others. With such a government no binding compact can be made because it will always be able to find an excuse for quibbling when it feels strong enough to make good a claim whether real or imaginary by superior force. If we are permitted to judge a people by the character of the gods they revere we are compelled to place a low estimate on that of the reigning German emperor and his entourage from the point of view of humanity. But I do not think the emperor should be held responsible for his overwrought idea of himself and of his intimate relations with the God of the Christians. He is either a monomaniac or a paranoiac. His exaggerated idea of the services which the

Hohenzollerns rendered to the cause of Germany and to civilization would be laughable if they were not so tragic. Posterity will hold him responsible for his acts, but hardly for his opinions any more than it does Louis XIV for his dictum: "The state! I am the state." *

*Charles Tower, in his recent book, "Changing Germany," expresses the opinion that the kaiser really believes in his divine calling. He is not only a mystic, but a supernaturalist, a curious mixture of pagan and Christian. By a strange inconsistency, he is also intensely superstitious, though perhaps without intending to be so, or without being fully conscious of it. The crown prince, on the other hand, is frankly pagan. It may be that he has a half mystic, half politic conception of his mission as a great unifying force. He holds out without discrimination his hands full of gifts to Catholics, to Protestants, to Evangelicals, to Moslems. He imagines himself as standing above and apart from the strife of creeds, anointed with the oil of priestly kingship, gifted with the ancient power of interpretation and with the privilege of Urim and Thummim, "a descendant of Aaron and the wearer of the purple of all the prophets that had preceded him. He dwells in a rarer atmosphere which lesser men cannot breathe, accounts himself the interpreter of the divine will, and feels it no blasphemy to exclaim, 'When the Unknown God seems to crown the standards of Imperial Germany with victory.' How wonderfully God has wrought for Wilhelm!"

XIII

In "Herrmann und Dorothea" Goethe tells us that in those days of stress and anxiety all the nations were looking toward the capital of the world, thus recognizing a primacy that Paris had long held and which now more than ever deserved the glorious appellation. He thought in common with many millions that the first rays of the sun of enlightenment which portended a new day were becoming visible above the horizon. But his high hopes were seriously disappointed when he beheld the brutal masses gradually gaining the ascendancy and beginning to uproot and to overturn the structure of society that had stood so long, and to direct into new and untried channels the current of events. He saw that what at first promised to be an evolution was degenerating into a revolution of the most sanguinary type. What he learned in those days served to confirm his faith in orderly development, a faith that James Russell Lowell has finely expressed in "Hebe":

"O spendthrift Haste! await the gods:
Their nectar crowns the lips of patience;
Haste scatters on unthankful sods
The immortal gift in vain libations."

It is interesting to note that among the reasons which influenced Goethe to choose Strassburg as the city in which to complete his legal studies was the fact that it was more French than German. He even thought of attaching himself to its university with a view to a life career. French had become so familiar to him that it was really one of his two vernaculars. He was for a time in the same dilemma with Edward Gibbon, who was for a while in doubt whether to compose his forthcoming "Decline and Fall" in French or in English. These two cases are striking testimony to the preponderance of French in the eighteenth century and go not a little way to justifying Frederic's preference for that tongue. Although Goethe had been accused in Leipzig of speaking too colloquially, he found himself in a worse case in Strasburg as regards French. He thus became disgusted and made up his mind to give his thoughts to the world in German. Besides, the Prussian king was looming up in the north with a force that made him appear as a pole-star about which a large part of Europe would soon revolve. It is furthermore characteristic of Goethe's whole life that the thesis for which he

obtained his degree was written to prove the importance of a state church. He exhorts all good citizens to submit patiently and decorously to authority, especially in matters of religion. In striking contrast to this placidity of temperament is the aggressive individualism to which Schiller gave vent in the violent diatribes against social and political restrictions that we find scattered all through "The Robbers." The *Weltanschauung* of Goethe and Schiller at about the same period of their lives could hardly have been wider apart. Schiller's views seem, however, to have changed less than those of Goethe. What he thought of a man who looks to another to decide fundamental questions for him is no doubt reflected in the words of the sorely perplexed Gordon when he exclaims in anguish of soul:

"The free, the mighty man alone may listen
To the fair impulse of his human nature.
Ah! we are but the poor tools of the law.
Obedience is the sole virtue we dare aim at."

Whereupon Butler consoles him with:

"Nay, let it not afflict you that your power
Is circumscribed. Much liberty, much error!
The narrow path of duty is securest."

This speech reflects the attitude of a man who abrogates his right to decide for himself what his duty is and is about to assassinate the benefactor

to whom he owes all he has and everything he is. He seeks to justify his perfidious act by heeding the vicious counsel of Butler so entirely at variance with Schiller's teaching in *Tell* that he alone is the strong man who depends upon himself.

XIV

Notwithstanding Goethe's good opinion of himself, he never hesitated to acknowledge his indebtedness to others. What he thought of originality is summed up in a judgment expressed to Zelter: "It is true that we bring capacities into life with us, but we owe our development to the thousand influences of a great world from which we assimilate what we can. I owe much to the Greeks and to the French; my debt to Shakespeare, Sterne and Goldsmith is immeasurably great. Nevertheless, the sources of my culture are not therewith indicated—to name them all would be an endless task, and to no purpose. The main thing is that a man has a soul loving the Truth and accepting it wherever he finds it." In his correspondence he frequently expresses his admiration for Byron. In him he finds invention more pronounced than in any other man in the whole realm of literature. But he has no sympathy with his reckless, inconsiderate activity, and regarded as his fatal fault his polemical tendency. It was in Byron that he

found what he often calls the daimonic, that mysterious creative force of which we can feel and see the effects, but which we cannot explain because we cannot put ourselves in the same mental attitude.

Goethe's high regard for English writers, but especially an admiration for Shakespeare that sometimes rises almost to a height of adoration, is a matter of a good deal of vexation to the German chauvinists of the ultra type. That the men who occupy the highest place in English literature seem to owe so little to their predecessors, while Goethe is so liberal in his acknowledgments of indebtedness to them, is interpreted as a mere polite hyperbole.

XV

It is generally believed that the economic and political condition of France were worse than those of Germany. This is probably an error due to the fact that French affairs were better known, notwithstanding the large emigration to this country that had been going on for more than a century before the beginning of the Revolution beyond the Rhine. Most of these immigrants came in English ships as virtual bondsmen and were in position to give accurate information upon the conditions they had left behind. Unfortunately, they were not much given to writing and the records that have come down to us are comparatively few. We cannot otherwise account for the enthusiasm with which many Germans, including Goethe and Schiller, greeted what they believe to be the dawn of a better day for their own country. Klopstock was sixty-five years old, hence no longer liable to be misled by the enthusiasm of youth, when he wrote: "Forgive me, O ye Franks, if ever I cautioned my country against following

your example; for I am now urging them to imitate you." His poems and writings were well enough known in the French capital to win for their author an election to membership in the National Convention in 1792. The idea that Schiller and especially Goethe are the dominating figures in German education is a case where the wish engendered the belief. It would hardly have been suggested half a century ago. Historians of modern German education admit that it was Pestalozzi who broke with the traditional methods of elementary instruction when he endeavored to put in practice the innovations proclaimed and defended with so much eloquence by Rousseau. But Rousseau was a Frenchman and Pestalozzi a Swiss of Italian ancestry. The German chauvinists have therefore felt constrained to find some one among their countrymen who was sufficiently conspicuous to render it unnecessary to admit that they were under the necessity of borrowing anything from abroad. This procedure is quite as foolish as it is unhistorical everywhere. As we have seen, Goethe was under no illusions in this respect. Schiller was endowed with some of the characteristics of the reformer. He clearly saw the ends he aimed at, but his vision was not always wide or sane; it was not sufficiently penetrating to enable

him to see obstacles that were well nigh insurmountable. He did not understand human nature in all its variations, nor the diversity of human motives. Goethe, on the other hand, was always sane, or, to use an expressive but not elegant word, he was level-headed. This is not necessarily a compliment. Because he understood men better he was almost totally lacking in enthusiasm. He did not feel as Schiller seems to have felt, that one man can do much to shape the course of events. While the reader will always find in Goethe's works information and insight, he will rarely find incitement to action.

XVI

Schiller is one of the most interesting and most lovable characters known to literature; one that is well worthy of the homage and imitation of posterity. Experience did not weaken his faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. To the sentiment expressed in

*"Seid umschlungen, Millionen,
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt,"*
(I embrace you, O ye millions,
I've a kiss for all the world).

he remained faithful to the end of his days. To the last he was an enthusiast. In fact, an inexplicable spirit of optimism seems to have pervaded the best minds of Europe during the latter half of the eighteenth century. In France we find Condorcet writing a treatise on the social and political perfectibility of the human race when he was in hiding to escape the guillotine. The same theme occupied the mind and pen of Madame de Stael. On the other side of the Rhine, Hegel was meditating upon and formulating a system of philos-

ophy of which the fundamental postulate is teleological. Goethe almost alone among the Germans of his day seems to have quickly regained his mental equilibrium, although it had never been greatly disturbed by the political upheaval. He did not lose faith in mankind, as his *Faust* testifies, but he did not give way to enthusiasm. Considered by and large, he is the most instructive literary character in the history of the world, and especially of Germany. His writings are the mirror of a man's life for two generations. He is well worth study both for what he accomplished and for what he tried to do and failed. He was not as great a man as he believed himself to be or he would not have entered into fields where he could never make himself at home nor acclimate himself. No other writer, not even Byron and Tolstoy, has put so much of himself into his works as did Goethe. But it is only by a carefully selected elimination of obstreperous facts from his life that he can be justly claimed as the model citizen and the model man.

XVII

Kant is acclaimed by the Germans as the philosopher who established a theory of morals that was destined to supersede all others. His categorical imperative is the pivot on which this doctrine revolves. It is thus expressed by Schwegler: "The highest principle of morals will therefore be: Act so that the maxim of thy will can at the same time be valid as a principle of universal conduct; that is, so act that no contradiction shall arise in the attempt to conceive the maxim of thy activity as a law to be universally obeyed." Albeit, the German emperor does not seem to have a very high opinion of the philosopher of Koenigsberg. He made no mention of him in his speech in that city in 1910, but laid great stress upon the fact that the Hohenzollern dynasty holds its power by divine right and not by the will of the people. The categorical imperative will stand the severest test. The Germans have, however, recently shown no disposition to apply it, at least, in international affairs. The Prussian chancellor admitted that

Belgium had been unjustly invaded, but justified the act on the plea of necessity. If we claim or even admit that any law may be broken when the necessity arises and take it upon ourselves to decide when necessity arises, it is absolutely worthless. No wonder that the kaiser did not mention Kant in his speech above referred to, nor on any other occasion. There is no place for him in the ethical code of the Hohenzollerns. As a thinker Kant was eminently sane. But this is a compliment that would be wrongly applied to some of his contemporaries or to his successors. In their writings we find some pearls of wisdom, but they are often buried in heaps of rubbish. In his "Ideas of a Philosophy of Human History," Herder tells us that man was created upright so that he might direct his thoughts and wishes towards heaven. Apes have been denied the gift of speech because they would have abused it. How does he know, when they have never had an opportunity? Besides, it is a large assumption that man has never abused the gift of speech. There is a great deal of testimony and abundant evidence to the contrary. "Speech would be dishonored in the mouth of the coarse, sensual, brutal monkey, who would undoubtedly ape human utterance with half the intelligence of man." "The purpose of human

nature is humanity." What is humanity? "It is reason and reasonableness in all classes of human affairs." Certainly. What are reason and reasonableness? What is to my advantage is reasonable and what is to my detriment is unreasonable is the way these terms are usually interpreted. Herder is convinced that only a perverted mind can fail to see that the world has been constructed by design. "Nature has expended all her store of human types upon the earth in order that she might deceive mortals throughout their lives by providing for each his own delight at his own time and at his own place." All this and much more of the same sort is interesting to the reader who allows himself to be borne along by turgid rhetoric and an ornate style. Except for the grammar such language closely resembles the sermons preached by men who do not know the alphabet. Herder was at one time in great vogue. He is still often referred to, although he does not appear to be much read. Nevertheless, two editions of his complete works were published in Germany between 1869 and 1899. With Hegel the case is different. His philosophy is still popular in Germany and is a good deal read in England and the United States. It rests upon the single postulate that the "contribution of philosophy is solely the simple

thought of reason, reason as governing the world, the world process as a rational process. Reason is revealed in the world, and nothing else is there revealed except it, its honor and its glory—this is what has been proved . . . by philosophy, and it may be here assumed as proved.” If history is a rational process, who directs it? Reasonable men, of course, under the guidance of an omniscient power. Or, as Hegel puts it, “it is the impulse of the spirit to find the Absolute—that is to say, itself.” How did it happen to get lost? How did it find out that it was lost? “The history of the world is simply the development of the conception of freedom” and “objective freedom involves the subjection of the accidental will which has only a formal existence.” Applied to politics, it would seem to mean the subjection of the individual to the behests of some directing power in the state, as, for example, the prosecution of persons, even of children, for lese majesty, if they happen to make some remark which the police consider derogatory to a divinely appointed autocrat. The subject is entirely free to say what he pleases, provided he says only what his superior approves. When reading these dicta one is reminded of the man who said: “I am open to conviction, but I would like to see the man who could

convince me.” What freedom means in the German empire is strikingly shown by a quotation from Professor Gauss’ “The German Emperor”: “When, therefore, in 1878, by a curious coincidence, two attempts were made upon the life of Emperor William I, Bismarck immediately and easily seized this occasion to crush Social Democracy and increase the imperial power. He dissolved the Reichstag, and in one month the law courts inflicted no less than five hundred years of imprisonment for lese majesty. Within eight months the authorities dissolved two hundred and twenty workingmen’s unions, suppressed one hundred and twenty-seven periodicals and two hundred and seventy-eight other publications, and innumerable *bona-fide* co-operative societies were compelled by the police to close their doors without trial and with no possibility of appeal. With equal dispatch numerous Social Democrats were expelled from Germany on a few days’ notice.” Hegel knows that Europe “represents the finality in the history of the world.” One would suppose from this dictum that Europe as a whole was striving to attain the same end, to reach the same goal. If this be true, the different countries are traveling widely divergent paths. “America has shown, and still does show, a complete lack of

physical and intellectual power." Most persons are of the opinion that America is mainly peopled by immigrants from Europe. Did they lose all physical and intellectual control in crossing the Atlantic? Are the Turks who are now fighting on the side of the Teutons to be classed as Europeans? One more quotation from Hegel: "This principle (Christ) is the pivot upon which the world rotates. From it history starts and to it returns. God is subject, Creator of Heaven and Earth. Yet it is not in this power that revelation consists, but in the sonship by which He has differentiated His own personality. Spirit exists only in so far as it is conscious of its object, and of itself as an object. Thus that Other which God sets outside of Himself is Himself; and in his contemplation of Himself as Other love and spirit exist. We are aware of God as Spirit when we are aware of Him as three in one, and it is from this principle that the history of the world has developed." It may be well to remark in this connection that in Germany philosophy and theology are no longer regarded as separate departments of human knowledge, but are considered as one and the same. Has theology swallowed up philosophy or vice versa? Or have the two mu-

tually absorbed each other so that the mixture is neither, like the familiar compound of oxygen and hydrogen?

XVIII

According to Hegel, the state is the milieu in which the citizen has to live. Few men will dispute this dictum. He should submit himself to its authority with free insight. Hegel considered a limited monarchy the best form of government and was somewhat partial to the English system, as were most of the continental thinkers of the eighteenth century. He defended a hereditary monarchy which necessarily presupposes a nobility. Albeit, the nobility is not so much to assist in legislation as to inform the monarch of the needs of his subjects. This was virtually the form of government under which he lived. His conception of the state corresponds in the main with that of the Greek thinkers, most of whom held that the individual exists for the state and not vice versa. In such a commonwealth it is the duty of the individual to obey the collective will as expressed by law. Such a doctrine justifies the most tyrannical government that can be imagined; in fact, the term "tyranny" would entirely lose its

sinister meaning. Thomas Hobbes is the most pronounced champion of the German government, or of any government controlled from above. His *Leviathan*, since it was written in Latin, was probably addressed to foreign rather than to English readers. Its influence seems to have been less in his country than in France. The primitive state of man being one of perpetual war, as he argues, the citizen agrees to submit himself to the authority of an individual or to individuals strong enough to suppress anarchy. If he goes to war by authority of the supreme power, it is no longer the conflict of wild tribes, but a war waged by the state. This compact having once been voluntarily entered into cannot be annulled by the subjects, not even by a majority. It is the duty of the sovereign to suppress all attempts at rebellion and to maintain his paramountcy by force, if need be. This condition, however, accrues to the benefit of the citizen because it enables him to live in peace. The state as portrayed by Hobbes is more nearly that of Germany and Russia than any other of recent times. Its ubiquitous police force is always at hand to suppress any manifestation of dissatisfaction with the existing order.

As an uncompromising teleologist Hegel maintained with Pope that "whatever is, is right." Since

the absolute Reason manifests itself in the state, or, rather, as the state is the manifestation of the absolute Reason upon earth, the subject has no cause for serious dissatisfaction, much less an excuse for trying to subvert it. If the state is God upon earth, it can only be produced by Reason. The doctrine at present openly or covertly proclaimed by many Germans is that as there is no God, the state is a logical deduction from the Hegelian postulate. It becomes a divine institution, so far as anything upon earth can be called divine, and every attempt to subvert it is sacrilege. As freedom can only be progressively realized in the state, the authorities have a sort of divine right to define how far that freedom may extend, and if it passes beyond bounds to check it. It follows, therefore, that if a strong man appears who completely dominates the government, who becomes in a sense the state, he should be obeyed without question. This interpretation of freedom differs *toto coelo* from that held by almost all the citizenry of the world. We can understand why so many Germans of the present day declare: "We are as free as any people in the world," or "We enjoy as much freedom as the people of the United States." Such a declaration may be gain-said, but it cannot be refuted, because agreement

upon the fundamental premises is out of the question. It may, however, be repeated that such a conception of freedom is confined almost entirely to Germany and Russia. It is probable that in no country of modern Europe, unless it be Russia, where thinkers have been so subservient to the government as in Germany. A few writers like Heine and Herwegh, who refused to be silenced, betook themselves to France and continued to hurl their Parthian arrows at their countrymen. Some of the younger restless spirits, like Schurz, Hecker, Sigel and others, migrated to the United States. Kant, although independent as a philosopher, readily submitted to the royal decree issued under William II forbidding him to deliver public lectures either on theological or philosophical subjects. In other words, he preferred to disregard his conscience rather than his sovereign. A command of his sovereign was looked upon as if it were an order from heaven. In 1723 C. F. Wolff was deprived of his professorship in Halle by order of William I and commanded to quit that city within twenty-four hours and Prussian territory within two days, under the threat of severe penalties. He was afterward appointed to a position in Marburg and later recalled to Halle by Frederic II. In 1820 Arndt was deposed from his

position in Bonn for his radical political opinions. Yet he was a thorough-going chauvinist and abhorred and belittled everything French. For his ultra-Teutonism and his deification of everything German he subsequently became the idol of his countrymen and, even to some extent, of German Austria. In 1837 seven professors were dismissed from the University of Goettingen by the Elector Ernest Augustus for protesting against the abrogation of the constitution. But their colleagues remained silent. The Goettinger Dichterbund was composed chiefly of young men who were enthusiastic and even fanatical enemies of tyranny. Yet their activities lasted hardly half a dozen years and ended in nothing. They were rhetoricians in politics, a form in which political activities usually found vent in Germany. It is hardly putting the case too strong to say that every German writer of note who exhibited the slightest liberal tendency, between the overthrow of Napoleon and the middle of the nineteenth century, found himself involved with one or another or with several of the German governments. The repressive activities of Metternich extended even to Switzerland and Holland. Any one who is interested in these matters will find confirmation of the above allegations by a glance into the biographies of Gutzkow, Jahn,

Fritz Reuter—who was even condemned to death—Laube, Boerne, Uhland, the Froebels, and particularly of Robert Blum. Blum's fate is particularly noteworthy because of the popular indignation aroused by his execution, which found tangible expression in a public subscription for his widow and children that netted the sum of thirty thousand dollars. Freiligrath, although a victim of political persecution, made a distinction between the German governments and the German people. He loved the latter and spent the last years of his life near Stuttgart. But even the one-time all-powerful Metternich could not permanently stem the rising tide of liberalism and felt constrained to take refuge for a time in England.

XIX

Professor Dewey says, in his "German Philosophy and Politics": "Higher schools and universities in Germany are really, not just nominally, under control of the state and part of the state life. In spite of freedom of academic instruction, when once a teacher is installed in office, the political authorities have always taken a hand, at critical junctures, in determining the selection of teachers in subjects that had a direct bearing on political policies. Moreover, one of the chief functions of the universities is the preparation of future state officials. Legislative activity is distinctly subordinate to that of administration conducted by a trained civil service, or, if you please, bureaucracy. Membership in this bureaucracy is dependent upon university training. Philosophy, both directly and indirectly, plays an unusually large role in the training. The faculty of law does not chiefly aim at the preparation of practicing lawyers. Philosophies of jurisprudence are an essential part of law teaching; and every one of the classic philosophers

took a hand in writing a philosophy of law and of the state. Theology and philosophy are no longer regarded as separate departments of knowledge, but merely phases of the same. It is not, therefore, surprising that we find professors, and even pastors in active service, avowing themselves as Nietzscheans or Hegelians or something else which has about as much connection with theology, especially pastoral, as has Confucianism, and less morality." A man may go about the country delivering lectures to prove that there never was such a person as Christ, and suffer no harm nor be molested. He may write a book for the purpose of proving that all the Hebrew patriarchs were merely figments of the imaginations of later writers, and lose nothing financially or professionally. Roman Catholic theologians may publish volume after volume accusing Luther of having broken every article of the moral law, except perhaps that one which forbids murder, and they will be allowed to have their say. But let some one question the divine right of kings, especially of the House of Hohenzollern, and he will forthwith be informed that he is venturing on forbidden ground, if he fares no worse. I am not aware that anybody has tried to discover by what process the present German emperor found out his divine

descent. Nor have I been able to discover that all his ancestors made this claim. Frederic II, with his unconcealed contempt for divine things, was hardly so inconsistent as to make it. Albeit, our William does not often mention him in his public addresses. Many of his subjects, probably the great majority, do not believe it. But they encourage the delusion, or obsession, or whatever one chooses to call that peculiar cast of mind, or wink at it for their own ends. Treitschke seems to have been in possession of the secret. But he has not revealed to his readers the sources of his information. His gospel has been summed up in the following words: "The Hohenzollerns are the only monarchs possessing divine right. Germans are the chosen people in whose hands might is always right. They are empowered by right of might to say what they please of other peoples and to treat them as they (the Germans) please." It must be particularly galling to the House of Wittelsbach and of Hapsburg, to mention no other reigning family, to find themselves excluded from the divine favor by a Hohenzollern, since both are equally old, if not older, and both of south German origin. The doctrine of the divine right of kings has perished into the twentieth century only in this one family; at least no other so openly and unblush-

ingly proclaims it. The British people made an end of it in 1688. Among the French it survived a century longer. In other European countries it never gained a foothold. If William, merely by virtue of his being a Teuton, is the chosen instrument of Providence, where do the south German kings come in, since they belong to the same race? If this one family alone has been so highly favored, the divine spirit chose some decidedly unsavory channels through which to flow during the last four or five centuries.

XX

That the German thinkers were most optimistic when the economic condition of their country was most deplorable is a remarkable intellectual phenomenon. Leibniz, whose parents must have had a vivid recollection of the distress caused by the Thirty Years' War, wrote a theodicy to prove that this world is the best possible of all worlds. However, as the treatise was written in French it was perhaps intended for readers beyond the Rhine, rather than in his own country. Still we have no reason to believe that the treatise does not represent his real sentiments. Hegel, too, was apparently well satisfied with the conditions amid which he lived. It has been remarked that Hegel, the "serene and subtle Swabian," did not formulate his philosophy of history until after Leipzig and Waterloo, and that he assimilated it with the interests of the Prussian state. It needs to be said, however, that Hegel, like most of his countrymen, had a profound admiration for the genius of Napoleon and a profound contempt for his German

opponents. In his correspondence he maintains the right of his countrymen to manage their own affairs, but it is doubtful that he anticipated or would have sanctioned such proceedings as were inaugurated by the war against Schleswig-Holstein. In the philosophy of Prussian statecraft the only crime a state can commit is to be weak, because to be weak is to be contemptible. Having abolished the God of Christianity, the spiritual idea is incarnate in the state, and the idea of the state is incarnate in the reigning dynasty. The Idea operates through force, violence and bloodshed. Force is holy when it is on the side of Germany, and sacrilege when it is directed against her. Force directed by Prussia is the only idealism, the only intelligence. The disastrous ending of the career of the first Napoleon convinced the French people that their welfare depended henceforth upon the cultivation of the arts of peace. The third Napoleon obtained the supreme power by proclaiming himself the champion of peace. But he was obsessed by the ambition to imitate the deeds of his great ancestor, and succeeded in drawing France into two or three European wars, to say nothing of the miserable fiasco in Mexico. The violent and persistent opposition in the French Chamber to the proposed extension of the

military apprenticeship by a year is conclusive evidence of the pacific spirit of the French people. As the event proved, the extension was the salvation of France. Few people believed that the pacific professions of the German emperor were a mask behind which was hidden the mephistophelean grin of satisfaction of a man who has succeeded in making others believe that words, whether spoken or written, are to be accepted in their literal meaning.

Schopenhauer, the chief apostle of pessimism, addressed an unsympathetic audience until about the middle of the nineteenth century, when Germany began to count for something in the political and economic world. Then he suddenly sprang into notice. Hartmann, who was in a sense his disciple, was received with marked attention almost from his first appearance before the public—that is, about the middle of the sixties. At that period one would have expected that the older philosophy, with its hopefulness and its self-satisfaction, to be particularly acceptable to a German clientele. Have we here an unconscious recrudescence of the belief held by the ancient Greeks, and which Herodotus has exemplified in the story of the ring of Polycrates, that great prosperity is the harbinger of some great disaster?

XXI

It is not possible to formulate a philosophy of history that will stand the test of careful scrutiny because the course of human events is not rational. Tennyson, after struggling with many doubts and misgivings, persuaded himself that there "is one far off divine event to which the whole creation moves." But he does not tell us what that divine event is. There is no far off goal toward which a nation, much less the whole creation, moves. Men direct their energies toward the attainment of some end that seems to them within their reach. This end is either the accumulation of wealth or the concentration of power in their own hands, or the gaining of reputation in some department of human activity. This end is rarely farther off than the second generation, usually no farther than the first. The vast majority of mankind do not look beyond supplying the needs of the passing day. Furthermore, what must be regarded as the regular course of human affairs is often interrupted or turned into new channels by the inter-

ference of some superman, whose appearance can not be foretold or foreseen. If Alexander the Great had reached the age of threescore years and ten, or even that of his father, the history of the ancient world would probably have been far different. If Oliver Cromwell had lived a score of years longer there would have been no need of an English revolution half a century later. The Spanish Armada was defeated by storms, not by seamen. If Gustavus Adolphus had survived a few years longer Germany would have become wholly, instead of partly, Protestant. Frederic the Great was saved from ruin by the sudden death of the empress of Russia. For centuries the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs contended for the paramountcy in German affairs, and the former finally won. Will the prize remain in their hands? Nations that are democratically governed rarely have a far-reaching policy; perhaps never. Nowhere in the world in this nineteenth century is the war god made an object of worship except at the Prussian court. Because that state had the good or ill fortune to increase its prestige and its territory by war, its leading spirits assume that the same end can be gained in no other way. The logical fallacy is as clear as anything can be that if such a course is right for one nation it must be right for every

other. The war demon will therefore be held in leash until his master sees a favorable opportunity to let him spring upon his unsuspecting victim. This encouragement of the fighting spirit, this glorification of carnage, is not merely a recurrence to the primitive stage of mankind; it is going back to the beast of prey that knows no right or justice, but is governed solely by the law of the stronger. The rulers of the ancient world who saw an opportunity to enlarge their domains never lacked for an excuse or justification to make the attempt. They were nothing more than a species of beasts of prey. We are now witnesses of a condition of affairs where a knowledge of those forces of nature most potent for destruction are exploited to the uttermost for the gratification of the basest passions that find lodgment in the human breast. It makes one sad when he reflects that the spirit that often animated the pre-Christian world, and which still at times breaks out among barbarous or semi-barbarous peoples, has projected itself into the twentieth century and into the conduct of a government which assumes to be the supreme type of excellence. No wonder the world stands aghast and asks, "What will the end be?" "Will this terrible and unexampled conflict end in such a way as to demonstrate that right is might, or will it

prove the truth of the Napoleonic dictum that providence is always on the side that has the heaviest cannon?" "Will the vindication of international justice be so complete that it will never have to be done over?"

XXII

The rapid rise of Prussia to the hegemony of Germany, and to some extent of Europe, is not, as is sometimes asserted, a unique phenomenon in the history of the world. When the Athenians had expelled the Persians from their territory it was a waste. Her citizens had to rebuild from the ground up. Albeit, in less than fifty years they had placed their country at the head of Grecian affairs and had created a literature that has not yet ceased to be the admiration of the world. Then overestimating her resources and underestimating those of her enemies, Athens engaged in the mad Sicilian expedition. Its failure was the beginning of the end. The final disaster was the catastrophe at The Goats River, and free Greece was soon no more. After Rome emerged victorious from the Punic wars her expansion moved forward with gigantic strides. Her success was partly due to a more secure base from which to operate, partly to her superior political organization, partly to the valor of her citizen soldiers. On the other hand,

the Carthaginian possessions were somewhat widely scattered; her armies were largely composed of mercenaries, and political intrigues at the capital city withheld the support from Hannibal which was indispensable to his success. In our own day the rise and expansion of Japan is a wonderful political phenomenon. Germany was built up on her own foundations and institutions. Japan, on the other hand, imported a foreign civilization and made it her own. An Asiatic people adopted a European culture and to a large extent discarded her age-old traditions. The Japanese likewise incorporated territory that is virtually contiguous and is still striving to make conquests, both near and remote. Neither is the invasion of Belgium, its ruthless devastation, and the massacre of the Armenians without precedent. He who thinks so will profit by a glance into the careers of Jenghis Khan and Tamerlane. The chief difference between those Asiatic conquerors and their twentieth century imitators is that they broke no treaties and did not proclaim themselves to be the protagonists of *Kultur*.

XXIII

Of the Nobel prizes for excellence in literature awarded between 1901 and 1913 only two were allotted to Germans, to Heyse and Hauptmann. It is true the names of Mommsen and Eucken are also on the favored list; but the fame of the former rests upon his work in history and of the latter on his contributions to philosophy. And be it noted, that although Eucken's philosophy is idealistic and cosmopolitan he joined in the outcry against the alleged defamation of his fellow-countrymen by the allies. As he had not been within a hundred miles of the scenes of the atrocities, his knowledge was purely subjective. Psychological certainty before the event that it would not happen and metaphysical cocksureness after the event that it could not have happened has been much in evidence among the Germans during the present war. In the last two years two more prizes in literature went to Scandinavians—that is, to Danes—a fact that puts the Germans still further in the background, especially when we consider the small

population of the northern countries. It is significant that no peace prize went to a German. When any government proposed or even suggested the appointment of an international tribunal for the peaceful adjustment of international differences the idea was always treated by Berlin either as visionary, or as dictated by fear, or as a hypocritical scheme for taking advantage of a country that was too weak to defend itself, or too credulous to know its business. If Germany is still the land of ideals and idealists it should have taken more peace prizes than all the other countries of Europe combined. Doubtless, if the kaiser should succeed in defeating the armies of the allies and exterminating all who oppose his inspired leadership there will be peace and good will upon earth, provided nobody has any will except the will prescribed by his Teutonic Highness. This is a large contract for one man.

The German social and political organization is the most scientifically constructed machine of its kind in the world. At the head is the nobility and the military caste, which constitutes a sort of interlocking diabolarchy. Next comes the official class, which is intelligent and influential because it is held in awe. In a certain sense it is open to everybody; but the conditions are onerous, and those who

have been successful in gaining admission are proud of their achievement. Thus it comes about that the government is something above and apart from the ordinary citizenry and looked up to with a feeling akin to awe. This class is not well paid, but its position is secure. The clergy, as well as the whole teaching force, are a part of it and are usually careful not to compromise their dignity or their position. When the government calls upon the citizens to take up arms they obey whether they have any interest in the conflict or not. It is not in the Teutonic nature to rebel against authority. When the peasants took up arms against their oppressors, Luther launched against them one of his fiercest diatribes. The Thirty Years' War was not essentially a conflict of creeds, as Catholics sometimes fought against Catholics and Protestants against Protestants. It was continued until the rulers were tired of it, or their resources completely exhausted, although nothing was really decided. The new German empire was not founded by the people, but by a coterie of military statesmen at Versailles. Its constitution, like that of the various minor states, does not embody a set of principles for which the voters demanded recognition, but a concession made by the sovereigns.

“When reproached by liberals for maintaining

a full-blown feudalism in the twentieth century, the Germans or German-Americans will always reply that republics and parliaments might be all very well for other nations, but that without a hierarchical organization of the government the Fatherland would never have achieved its splendid educational system, its scientifically fostered industry, its admirable municipal organization, its intensive cultivation and conservation of the resources of the country and its well diffused prosperity. But if the results are to be ascribed to the wise rule of the Hohenzollerns, or to the efficiency of the Prussian bureaucracy, it is amazing that results so similar should be attained under very different political systems. The German peasant may farm more intelligently than the British agricultural laborer, but he is in no way superior to the Dane. Prussian cities are clean, but so are the Dutch. The industries of Germany are conducted with less waste, perhaps, than ours, but co-operation is as familiar to the artisan and enterpriser of Flanders as it is east of the Rhine. Education is more nearly universal than it is in France, but not more so than in Norway. Germans are orderly, law-abiding, and governed by officials who know their business. Very true, but so are the Swiss. There is really nothing peculiar about *Kultur* except the idolatry

of the Prussian state borrowed from Treitschke the Czech, and a dash of militarism derived from Nietzsche the Pole."

ADDENDA

After the completion of my manuscript my attention was called to the following passages in the writings of Goethe. Some of them were new to me, others I had forgotten. Although they are merely corroborative of what has already been said, they seemed worthy of being added to what precedes.

In a conversation with Eckermann on the 3d of May, 1827, Goethe, after lauding Burns and Beranger and contrasting the Scotch with his own countrymen, continued: "We Germans are of yesterday. We have, to be sure, been cultivating ourselves energetically for a century; but a few more centuries must still elapse before so much mind and elevated culture will become universal among our people that they will appreciate beauty like the Greeks, that they will be inspired by a beautiful song, and that it will be said of them, 'it is a long time since they were barbarians.' "

On the 27th of July, in the same year, he said: "We are weakest in the esthetic department and may wait long before we meet such a man as Carlyle. It is a pleasure to see that intercourse is now so close between French, English and Germans

that we shall be able to correct one another's errors." On May 30th, 1831, the conversation was upon the *daimonic*, when Goethe said: "It throws itself willingly into figures of importance and prefers somewhat dark times. In a clear Prussian city like Berlin, for instance, it would scarcely find occasion to manifest itself." "The Germans do not easily receive anything out of the common course and what is of a higher nature often passes them without their being aware of it." On March 12th, 1828, he pays his respects to the police, among other unfavorable judgments, thus: "Not a boy may crack a whip, or sing, or shout—the police is immediately at hand to forbid it." Just before, he had contrasted the freedom of the English with the servility of the Germans, and then added: "Such as they are they are thoroughly complete men." Goethe frequently accuses his countrymen of a certain narrowness or provincialism. He seems to have had this thought in mind when he makes Mephistophiles say, near the beginning of the second part of *Faust*:

"By that I know the learned lord you are.

What you don't touch is lying leagues afar;

What you don't grasp is wholly lost to you;

What you don't reckon can't be true;

What you don't weigh, it has no weight, alas,

What you don't coin, you're sure it will not
pass."

December 4th, 1825: "I hardly know any one who, at the same time, is so sensitive as Zelter. And in addition we must not forget that he has lived more than half a century in Berlin. Now as I am beginning to notice more and more the race which lives there is so bold that one cannot accomplish much with delicate manners, but, on the contrary, must show one's teeth occasionally and be a bit rude to keep one's head above water."

(The German word translated "bold" above is *verwegen*. It often means "rash" or "venture-some." Goethe probably used it in the sense of "unconventional." Zelter is said to have been much given to disregarding the usages of polite society, or at least to have paid little attention to them.)

When one of the soldiers in Egmont proposes a toast to war, an indignant Flemish burgher cries out: "War! War! Do you realize what you are shouting. It is easy for you to bellow the word. But I wish I could tell you how sick it makes the rest of us. Drums beating the whole year round! To hear of nothing but columns advancing here and there, coming up over a hill, making a stand by a mill,—how many were slaughtered on this place, how many on another; how one side scored a success and then the other is defeated;—and with it all a fellow doesn't know who won and who lost anything;—how a town was taken, citizens murdered,—and what happened to the

wretched women and children. Nothing but fear and trembling. Every minute you think: Here they come; now it is our turn." This imaginary burgher of the sixteenth century proves to have been a true prophet of what was to befall some of his countrymen and countrywomen in the early years of the twentieth.

In *Iphigeneia* we read:

"A king who orders an unholy act

Finds slaves enough who will, for gain or
favor,

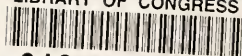
Take on themselves half of the deed's opprobrium;

But spotless is his presence as before."

As we read the numerous unfavorable judgments passed by Goethe on his countrymen when they were under discussion, we are justified in assuming that he often had them in mind when they are not specifically mentioned.



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